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# What Can Happen When We Share The Virginia Survey and Planning Cost Share Program

Sharing is an activity that sometimes runs counter to our competitive instincts. But the Virginia Cost Share Program has demonstrated that sharing and pooling resources can strengthen partnerships between the state and local governments to achieve survey, planning, and protection goals that are mutually beneficial to both parties.

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR), the state historic preservation office (SHPO) for Virginia, launched a program nearly 10 years ago using a unique system of sharing costs for survey and planning programs. Until that time, survey grants were awarded to local governments with the agency offering limited support and often receiving inconsistent products. In 1991, a gubernatorial directive mandated reducing the burdens of administrative responsibilities imposed on local governments by the state. This new mandate gave us the opportunity to try an approach that stood the traditional “grant” concept on its head and allowed us to truly “partner” with local governments. As with traditional grants, local governments would be invited to submit proposals for various survey and planning activities, accompanied by a projected budget for the project. The proposals would be evaluated on specific

criteria—such as the level and quality of survey in a particular jurisdiction; the degree to which a particular area was threatened by impending development; or the willingness of an area to incorporate survey results into its comprehensive plan. Then—and this is the unique part—the local governments selected would send a check for one-half the cost to the Virginia SHPO. The state would agree to fund up to one-half of the project, and most important, would agree to assume the entire administrative burden of actually managing the work.

The administrative role of the state included development of scopes of work, preparation of requests for proposals; selection and hiring of consultants; paying the bills; providing a forum for public comment; and reviewing the products to ensure compliance with state and federal guidelines. Local governments were enthusiastic about the program. For one thing, small localities seldom had adequate staff to manage and oversee complex cultural resource survey projects. Local governments usually do not have the resources to identify and hire consultants from a broad geographic area. Particularly in the smaller jurisdictions, staff with specific training in preservation planning and cultural resource management are rare.

The Virginia Code spells out the mission of the Department, directing the SHPO “to conduct a broad survey and to maintain an inventory of buildings, structures, districts, objects, and sites of historic, architectural, archaeological or cultural interest which constitute the tangible remains of the Commonwealth’s cultural, political, economic, military, or social history.” (See § 10.1-2202.6.) The Virginia General Assembly appropriates funds specifically dedicated to survey and planning activities. The placement of these funds as a line item of the agency’s overall budget indicates the lawmakers’ recognition of the survey function as critical to the agency’s overall mission.

*A collection of early 20th-century dwellings reflecting the Tidewater style of housing in Norfolk’s North Ghent Historic District. The National Register nomination for this district grew out of a survey conducted using Virginia’s Survey and Planning Cost Share funds.*





*An early 20th-century residence in the Riverview Historic District in Norfolk. The nomination for this district was prepared using Virginia's Survey and Planning Cost Share funds.*

*Photos courtesy E.H.T. Tracerics, Inc.*

*A good collection of early 20th century residences on Graydon Avenue in Norfolk's North Ghent Historic District. The survey work and National Register nomination preparation were funded through Virginia's Survey and Planning Cost Share program.*

Cost Share award agreements are limited to local governments, planning district commissions, and other state agencies. The agency has increasingly encouraged local preservation groups and non-profit organizations to lend their financial support by providing some of the local share for each project. In one instance, a museum foundation provided local funds; in another, funds came from a local bank.

During the early years of the program, only five to seven projects were undertaken each year, most of which were standard county-wide architectural surveys. By 1999-2000, the number of projects awarded annually had grown to 21 with the state appropriation of \$185,000 and local funds of \$237,000. The Department has expanded the range of eligible activities to include development of local ordinances and design guidelines and preparation of National Register nominations, particularly for historic districts. As of July 2000, 73 Virginia localities have completed, or will complete in the coming fiscal year, 109 survey and planning projects, adding hundreds of new properties to the state's inventory and resulting in the National Register recognition for 41 new or expanded historic districts.

The results of these projects have been far reaching and in some cases unexpected. The Department anticipated that the survey and establishment of improved resource databases would enhance its archival holdings and research potential. The required survey reports provide

analysis of building types and broad historic contexts to assist in future evaluation. Attached appendices provide lists of surveyed properties by property type, date, context, style or address — information that is invaluable in the evaluation process.

But it is for localities that the results of the various projects have been the most stunning. For local planners, the requirement for mapping all properties over 50 years old provides graphic illustration of the greatest concentration of historic resources. Armed with this information, planners can plug in data as they develop local comprehensive plans. The Department requires a scripted slide presentation for each project, which yields educational benefits for local residents of all ages. The Department encourages localities to pursue publication of their illustrated survey reports, resulting in another effective educational tool. Thematic surveys have led to significant heritage tourism developments. In Gloucester County, Virginia, for example, a Cost Share project surveyed all the county's historic country stores and produced a driving tour for residents and visitors and a guidebook for local school children. The information gleaned from this project offered valuable insight into, and a greater appreciation for, the country stores that tell the story of Gloucester County as it was in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A recently completed archeological survey of gold mines in Louisa County, Virginia, produced a guide to mining resources in the county and an interpretive bike tour. In the coming year, a survey of archeological sites associated with the pottery industry in southwest Virginia's Washington County will produce a significant exhibit at the William King Regional Arts Center in Abingdon.



The growing interest in Virginia's and the federal preservation tax credits has led to a tremendous growth in the number of urban historic districts in the state. Comprehensive surveys of properties that document each individual structure speed up the process of identifying buildings that are eligible for tax credits. In the most recent Cost Share cycle (2000-2001) the City of Waynesboro is undertaking survey of a downtown commercial historic district, a residential Victorian neighborhood, and a historic African-American neighborhood. Bristol, Virginia-Tennessee is working on a downtown historic district that straddles the state line, the first bi-state effort under Virginia's Cost Share Program. Virginia's capital city of Richmond has completed a survey of two large inner-city neighborhoods, with survey documentation enabling nearly 1,000 property owners to be eligible for state rehabilitation tax credits. With the help of volunteer field survey, Norfolk has completed

National Register nominations for six residential historic districts, bringing recognition to over 3,000 properties. Roanoke, Virginia, is currently participating in a Cost Share project to survey and register over 200 structures in its downtown commercial area, a job considered critical to the city's downtown revitalization efforts. Because all of these projects are initiated by the local jurisdiction—city, county, or town—there is widespread and strong support and little sentiment that state government is imposing its planning efforts on the local governments.

The important partnerships that flow from these Cost Share projects underscore the parallel interests of the state and the locality. Virginia looks forward to continuing this comprehensive effort to identify, evaluate, and ultimately to protect its priceless historic resources.

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## The Eye of the Professional vs. Opinion of the Community

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All cultural heritage management actions in Australia, ranging from preservation to permitted destruction, are derived from a statement of cultural significance. Heritage places are ascribed cultural significance according to their aesthetic, historic, scientific, and social value. Each of these value components requires careful assessment in a manner most suited to the characteristics of that component.<sup>1</sup> The assessments are generally carried out by cultural heritage professionals, often with little explicit recognition of any values that may be held by the wider community. This practice is based on the implicit assumption that heritage professionals have the same value system as the community they serve, and that, therefore, they can develop plans which adequately represent the community's interest.

While the assessment of scientific and historic value, aided by guidelines, has long been the

prerogative of historians, architects, and archeologists, and while aesthetic value has been assessed by architects and art historians, the assessment of social value has often received only cursory treatment. A review of 72 shire heritage plans completed for New South Wales (NSW) has shown that the value discussion was dominated by the assessment of historic and aesthetic value. Less than 1% of the total number of pages discussing the four core values was devoted to social value.<sup>2</sup>

Part of the problem rests in the nature of assessment, where the heritage "profession" ascribes great significance to the physical form, fabric, or function of a "place," while largely disregarding its experiential nature. For the average citizen, however, this aspect makes a particular heritage place significant and others irrelevant. While heritage managers have accepted such values for indigenous cultural property,<sup>3</sup> this has not been widely accepted practice in the non-indigenous arena.